

James
Woolford/DC/USEPA/US
06/17/2009 01:47 PM

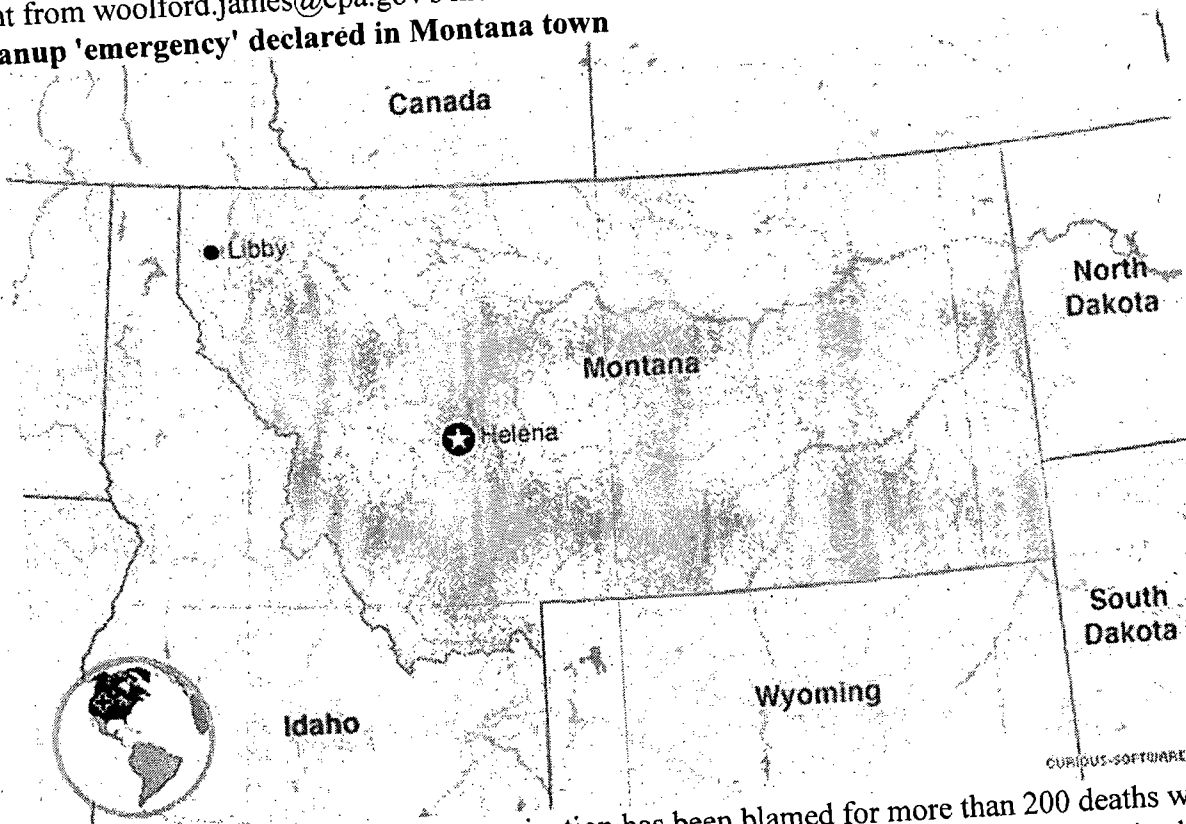
To Mary-Kay Lynch/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Carol
Campbell/R8/USEPA/US@EPA, Phyllis
Anderson/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Doug
cc John Reeder/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, GailAnn
Cooper/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, "Elliott Gilbert"
<gilbert.elliott@epa.gov>, Sandra
bcc
Subject Fw: CNN - Asbestos cleanup 'emergency' declared in
Montana town

FYI.

Sent from my BlackBerry Wireless Handheld

From: James Woolford
Sent: 06/17/2009 03:41 PM AST
To: Elizabeth Southerland
Cc: James Woolford
Subject: CNN - Asbestos cleanup 'emergency' declared in Montana town

Sent from woolford.james@epa.gov's mobile device from <http://www.cnn.com>. Asbestos
cleanup 'emergency' declared in Montana town



A Montana town where asbestos contamination has been blamed for more than 200 deaths will get new cleanup and medical assistance from the Obama administration under a "public health emergency" declared Wednesday.

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A Montana town where asbestos contamination has been blamed for more than 200 deaths will get new cleanup and medical assistance from the Obama administration under a "public health emergency" declared Wednesday.

The declaration is the first ever issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, which has been overseeing the cleanup of Libby, Montana, for 10 years.

The town was heavily contaminated with asbestos-laced dust that federal prosecutors said resulted in more than 200 deaths and 1,000 illnesses.

"This is a tragic public health situation that has not received the recognition it deserves by the federal government for far too long," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said in a statement accompanying the declaration.

In May, a federal jury acquitted mine operator W.R. Grace and three of its former executives of criminal charges related to the contamination. During Jackson's confirmation hearing in January, Montana Sen. Max Baucus said the town's 12,000 residents had been "hung out to dry" and pressed Jackson to review the issue.

The Libby operation began producing vermiculite -- a mineral often used in insulation -- in 1919. But the vermiculite was contaminated with tremolite asbestos, a particularly toxic form of asbestos that has been linked to mesothelioma, a cancer that can attack the lining of the lungs, abdomen, or heart.

Dust from the plant covered patches of grass, dusted the tops of cars and drifted through the air in a hazy cloud that became a part of residents' daily lives.

Grace operated the facility from 1963 until it closed in 1990. During the company's three-month trial, prosecutors argued that its executives knowingly released the substance and tried to hide the danger from the community.

The company did not deny that the asbestos came from its mine, but it said it acted responsibly to clean up the contamination. It paid millions in medical bills for residents of Libby and neighboring Troy, and agreed in 2008 to pay \$250 million to reimburse the EPA for its cleanup efforts.